

Acting the Prince: *Giacomo Joyce* and *Hamlet*

Mick Greer

School of Arts and Humanities, University of Lisbon
University of Lisbon Centre for Theater Studies

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G*iacomo Joyce*, probably written during the summer of 1914¹ though only published in 1968,² and which sketches the obsession of a rather timid English teacher for an unnamed female student in Trieste, is James Joyce's shortest prose work and the only one not set in Dublin. This has led to *Giacomo* being rather overlooked and somewhat 'exiled' to the periphery of the Joyce canon. When brought into critical consideration, until recently, questions of categorisation were the order of the day with, for example, Henriette Lazaridis Power asking in the *James Joyce Quarterly*, "What exactly is its genre? Should it be considered an essentially verbal or visual text?" (623). Lazaridis Power did not, arguably (and perhaps understandably), come to a definitive conclusion in 1991, and although the collection of essays, *Giacomo Joyce: Envoys of the Other*³ has made significant headway in bringing *Giacomo Joyce* into the fold and exploring its literary value, attempting to answer Lazaridis Power's initial question is still no easy matter.

Giacomo Joyce does indeed rather defy clear categorisation, lying somewhere between the prose poem and the dramatic monologue. The

¹ See Richard Ellmann, ed. *Giacomo Joyce*. London: Faber and Faber, 1983 (1968). xvi.

² Fritz Senn has written of the "ripple of excitement early in 1968 when a smallish, limited, expensive edition of a book called *Giacomo Joyce* presented itself to the reading public as a second posthumous work by Joyce, after the considerably longer fragment of *Stephen Hero*. There was a new, unknown work and uncharted territory" (20).

³ Louis Armand and Clare Wallace, eds. *Giacomo Joyce: Envoys of the Other*. Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2006 (2002).

former allows Giacomo great technical freedom in presenting his own attempt to experience “[t]he Pleasure that abideth for a Moment” (Wilde 863); while the latter allows the writer “to inhabit a range of personae that may, as opposed to the confidential, earnest lyric ‘I’, open a space for doubt and ambivalence around the speaker” (Wallace 10).⁴

Vicki Mahaffey has put forward that *Giacomo Joyce* is “a seduction piece” (198) in various senses. The plot, such as it is, concerns a failed attempt at seduction (an ‘attempt’, however, that barely warrants even that description). A more successful seduction is that carried out on the reader, who is both teased and seduced by the quantity and use of literary and possibly biographical allusions. The possible echoes of Joyce’s life in *Giacomo* fall outside the scope of this article, but as we read and experience moments of literary recognition, followed by confirmation (or not) through the notes in the various editions,⁵ we find we have been drawn into the game of finding quotations and allusions which seem to have slipped through the editorial net. As we explore Giacomo’s fantasised and highly ambiguous relationship with his girl student, the more echoes we are told of, the more echoes we hear within the framework of what John McCourt has described as the “conscious artistry” of a “heightened awareness of form [and an] inter-textual nature” (197).

⁴ A point which reminds us of Joyce’s distinctions between personal lyrical art and impersonal dramatic art in *Stephen Hero*: “Lyrical art (...) is the art whereby the artist sets forth his image in immediate relation to himself (...); dramatic art is the art whereby the artist sets forth his image in immediate relation to others” (72); and, more explicitly, in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* where Stephen argues that “[t]he personality of the [dramatic] artist (...) impersonalises itself, (...) The artist, like the God of creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails” (194-5). The drama of *Giacomo Joyce* lies, I believe, in the character’s struggle to free himself from the former position and achieve the latter.

⁵ Ellmann provided more notes on *Giacomo* when editing *Poems and Shorter Writings* Ed., intr. and notes Richard Ellmann, A. Walton Litz and John Whittier-Ferguson. London: Faber and Faber, 1991, than in his 1968 edition of the solitary text. However, the probable echo of Hamlet’s “the readiness is all” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* V. ii., 218) in Giacomo’s “all is ready” (Joyce, *Giacomo Joyce* 6), for example, goes unmentioned.

What I shall suggest in the following pages is that there are structural parallels, as well as thematic and textual echoes linking the Shakespeare play and *Giacomo Joyce*. These *Giacomo* parallels and echoes, however, do not always match the order in which they occur in *Hamlet*. Joyce does not restrict himself to a rigid correspondence between either the respective characters or the sequence of events. As he told the Irish artist, Arthur Power, "All art in a sense is distorted" (85). In *Giacomo*, I argue, Joyce adopts and distorts the Elizabethan-Jacobean five act structure. It joins, as we shall see, other textual "ghosts in the mirror" (*Giacomo Joyce* 6), and contrasts with the "nicely polished looking-glass" of *Dubliners*, in which the Irish people could have "one good look at themselves" (*Selected Letters* 90); as well as being a possibly ironic pre-echo of the distortion Shakespeare himself undergoes, in *Ulysses*, within Bella Cohen's Circean mirror (*Ulysses* 671).

In the accompanying tables for each act which appear in the appendix, I have summarised the main parallels between the two texts. After dividing *Giacomo Joyce* into five acts corresponding to the Shakespeare, I decided to count the number of lines using the 1968 Faber edition of *Giacomo Joyce* reissued in 1983. The line count in the Shakespeare is given according to the 1982 Arden *Hamlet* edited by Harold Jenkins. This approach produced the intriguing result that the "acts" in both texts were roughly similar in length.

Giacomo Joyce is indeed haunted by various literary "ghosts in the mirror". As we shall see, in addition to *Hamlet*, these range from Shelley's *The Cenci* to various plays of Henrik Ibsen. Giacomo himself can even be seen as something of a precursor to Jean-Pierre Sarrazac's concept of the "playwright rhapsode". A "rhapsode" was the ancient Greek professional reciter of epic poems and, going back to the Greek origins of the word (*rhapto* meaning stitch and *oide* meaning ode or song), Sarrazac's "playwright rhapsode" assembles various theatrical texts and elements in order to create a new work:

stitching together texts for the theatre as well as by literally quoting or allusively referring to fragments of traditional dramatic genres, aesthetic categories or theatrical conventions and staging solutions. (Borowski and Sugiera 21)

Empowered by Joyce with this *rhapto* ability, Giacomo Joyce multiplies fictional images of himself and those around him. His imagination stages an internalised drama of joy and pain for him to enact his guilty urges and desire for self-aggrandisement in relation to the anonymous girl, who is necessarily also cast in a number of roles. She is a keen student of literature, but there is more than simple teasing in Giacomo describing her as “a lady of letters” (*Giacomo Joyce* 12). More tellingly, she is interested in the theatre, or at least attends it. We hear that “[s]he is dressing to go to the play. There are ghosts in the mirror” Looking “upward from night and mud” into her dressing room this “one below” — both physically and socially — imagines being in her room. Watching his imagined self watching the girl, Giacomo manages to make out her mirror, but not very clearly. She and the others only appear as indistinct reflections, “ghosts”. This is the spark for his imagination and so she is variously dressed as Hilda Wangel (*Idem* 7) from *The Master Builder*; Hedda Gabbler (*Idem* 8); Ophelia (*Idem* 10); Beatrice from Shelley’s *The Cenci* (*Idem* 11); and possibly Nora from *A Doll’s House* (although that name will obviously always create some ambiguity in a Joycean context) (*Idem* 15). She is also associated with the non-dramatic roles of Dante’s Beatrice (*Idem* 11) and Hester Prynne from *The Scarlet Letter* (*Idem* 16).⁶

In dressing himself and the object of his passion in these theatrical “borrowed robes” (Shakespeare, *Macbeth* I. iii. 109) and creating fictional selves, Giacomo casts himself, by implication, in the roles of the male counterparts in the various texts. If she is “Hedda! Hedda Gabler!” (*Giacomo Joyce* 8), then he is — however briefly, and if only in his own eyes — the attractively unconventional, artist-intellectual Lövborg; rather than the George Tesman figure he knows he actually is. He can enjoy these fake parallels with major theatrical figures from his theoretically safe and multiple standpoint as writer/director/spectator.

No text, however, is reflected more significantly in the distorting mirror of *Giacomo Joyce* than *Hamlet*. “I expound Shakespeare to docile Trieste”, Giacomo tells us. “Marked you that?” (*Idem* 10) he adds, misquoting Polonius (we might say), before directly referring to the father

⁶ See Vicki Mahaffey’s “Giacomo Joyce” in *Giacomo Joyce: Envoys of the Other*, 43-44 and 64-65.

of Hamlet's beloved.⁷ *Hamlet* appears, either echoed, mis- or directly quoted, and distorted everywhere in Joyce, as we know: *Giacomo Joyce* is no exception.

Between November 1912 and February 1913, Joyce gave a series of 12 lectures on the Shakespeare play, at the Università del Popolo, in Trieste. When he began them, Joyce was, like Hamlet, 30, and considered himself an exile, if not necessarily the "embittered idealist" Giacomo says the Danish prince "perhaps" is (*Ibid.*). Although the lectures are now lost, his extensive surviving notes⁸ suggest that the Prince and the play would still have been very much in his mind when he came to write *Giacomo Joyce* during the summer of 1914.

Like a blurred reflection of the Prince of Denmark, it seems that Giacomo goes in search of "[t]he only way of expressing emotion in the form of art (...) a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events, which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion" (Eliot, *Selected Prose* 48). To what extent, however, is Giacomo, like Eliot's Hamlet, "dominated by an emotion which cannot be expressed because it is "in excess of the facts as they appear" (*Ibid.*)? This is, perhaps, "the rub" (*Hamlet*, III. i. 65) for Giacomo, as he composes his "love poem which is never recited" (Ellmann intro., *Giacomo Joyce* xi). The "facts" of his relationship with the student, "as they appear", are meagre to say the least. This is why Giacomo's "emotion (...) is inexpressible" (Eliot, *Selected Prose* 48) without the theatrical characters he draws on and the fictional situations they conjure

⁷ Polonius says, "O ho! Do you mark that?" (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* III. ii. 109). It is, however, not unusual for Joyce's characters to misquote the bard. In *Ulysses*, both Bloom and Stephen misquote *Hamlet* I. v. 9-10: "I am thy father's spirit, / Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night." Bloom's version has the ghost name Hamlet and uses 'time' instead of 'term': "*Hamlet*, I am thy father's spirit, / Doom'd for a certain *time* to walk the night" (Joyce, *Ulysses* 192) (my italics). Stephen later also misquotes "Hamlet, I am thy father's spirit" in also naming the prince (*Idem*, 241). Although this is obviously not the place to elaborate on the point, such misquotation forges a significant link between Giacomo and the two characters from *Ulysses* in terms of one of the thematic foundations of Joyce's writing: relationships between parents and children.

⁸ For a discussion of these notes see, for example, William H. Quillian.

up. They are the “set of objects” which allow him to perform (only appearing to act) in his fantasy.

According to Declan Kiberd, Giacomo would, in this respect, be clearly distinct from his author:

For Joyce, *Hamlet* the play as well as Hamlet the character was a dire warning that interior monologue might displace action rather than enable it. His soliloquies immobilise Hamlet: instead of doing, he theorises about doing, in ways that just deepen his depression. (332)

In *Ulysses*, Stephen and Bloom experience both advantages and disadvantages from displacing action through interior monologue. Giacomo Joyce, who only exists within one, goes in search of the “objective correlatives” which structure that world (the text); and which allow him to create, enjoy and distance his “erotic commotion” (Ellmann intro., *Giacomo Joyce*, xii).

Vicki Mahaffey has argued that *Giacomo Joyce* represents “an opposition between inner and outer reality” and “how that opposition breaks down”. For Mahaffey, the text prepares the way for the “drama and fantasy” of the “Circe” chapter in *Ulysses* (188). Giacomo’s “objective correlatives” is the means of at least partially satisfying his inner self and, at the same time, protecting his relationship with the exterior world; thus ensuring that this “opposition” actually remains intact. In his awareness of the contrast between the real and the imaginary, however, more than a touch of self-irony is added to the mix: “It will never be. You know that well. What then? Write it, damn you, write it! What else are you good for?” (*Giacomo Joyce* 16).

The thrill of even an imaginary chase is, nevertheless, not to be dismissed too lightly. References, characters and lines from existing dramas come pre-packaged with emotion, meaning he is not required to produce any himself. They are the means, to adapt Joyce’s phrase from “Drama and Life”,⁹ which enable Giacomo to both condition and control this emotional “scene”. They are the external facts shaping his internal fiction. They can also be lowered on Giacomo’s stage to provide a protective curtain. Throughout the text, when his recounting of an episode seems to be moving towards some form of emotional climax, it is expressed or curtailed

by way of a direct theatrical reference¹⁰ or allusion.¹¹ Fictional emotions and, thus, fictional consequences replace real ones. When this is not the case, an emotionally charged and dangerously open ended paragraph/episode is immediately followed by the speaker taking refuge in some kind of performance, an act through which Giacomo can escape the personal.¹²

In his fantasy, the student is passive, silent and seems unable or, perhaps, is simply unwilling to dress herself. "She cannot", he almost gasps, "no, she cannot. She moves backwards towards me mutely" (*Idem* 7). So he proceeds to help her, his burgeoning excitement conveyed by a quickening stream of "s", "sh" and "th":

[H]er lithe body sheathed in an orange shift. It slips its ribbons of moorings at her shoulders and falls slowly: a lithe smooth naked body shimmering with silvery scales. It slips slowly over the slender buttocks of smooth polished silver and over their furrow, a tarnished silver shadow (...). Fingers, cold and calm and moving (...). A touch, a touch. (*Ibid.*)¹³

⁹ For the young Joyce, drama was "strife, evolution, movement in whatever way unfolded; it exists, before it takes form, independently; it is conditioned but not controlled by its scene", "Drama and Life" in *Occasional, Critical and Political Writing*, 2000, ed., intr. and notes by Kevin Barry, 24.

¹⁰ For example, the eruption of Hamlet's "Hillo! Ostler! Hilloho!" following "the meek supple tendonous neck, the fine-boned skull. Eve, peace, the dusk of wonder" (*Giacomo Joyce* 3).

¹¹ The allusion through "[c]rossed in love?" (*Idem* 5), to "the star-cross'd lovers" of another Italian city (Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* Prologue 2) for example, seems a defensive measure by a Giacomo feeling overwhelmed by the Polonius/Capulet figure of the student's father. Nevertheless, in this context, it does, almost inevitably, also invoke Juliet's "[d]eny thy fatherand refuse thy name" (*Idem*, II. ii. 34).

¹² Giacomo's outburst that "[h]er flesh recalls the thrill of that raw mist-veiled morning, hurrying torches, cruel eyes. Her soul is sorrowful, trembles and would weep. Weep not for me, O daughter of Jerusalem!" is immediately followed by a restoration of intellectualised, distanced emotional order through "I expound Shakespeare to docile Trieste" (*Idem* 10).

¹³ "A touch, a touch" cannot fail to bring Laertes' comment to mind (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* V. ii. 289).

Finally (and typically) he withdraws, as climax is near, into a theatrical reference; the direct quotation, rather than echo, from *Hamlet* fictionalising the action which even in his imagination he is unable to realise. The self-irony Giacomo so often uses to undercut his fantasy appears again in the opening line of the very next paragraph. He reports the debilitated physical state this passion has reduced him to, in which “ess” and “th” sounds mockingly echo his previously increasing sexual excitement: “[s]mall witless helpless and thin breath”.¹⁴

Although his imagination is undressing the girl at this moment, Giacomo is far more intrigued by the idea of “dressing” her. We have already seen how he is addressed by many names which, rather than fulfil their conventional role of identifying him, effectively add layer after layer of fiction-based ambiguity. This student is, as we have seen, given further layers through theatrical identities, as Giacomo makes her, quite literally, a “lady of letters”. How does he dress the girl? It is not “how” but as “who”, the word with which the text begins, that concerns us. As her “pale face surrounded by (...) furs” (*Giacomo Joyce* 1), like a framed blank canvas, seems to be awaiting an artist’s touch, so Giacomo’s “coltura” (*Idem*) fires his imagination as the text unfolds. Both director and audience of her imagined performance, as well as his own, Giacomo can cast her as he likes.

Lacking the temerity to act on his feelings for the student in reality, Giacomo thus moves into the theatrical world of the imagination to carry out his courtship. And it is in keeping with this reticence that he casts himself as the Prince of Denmark, by implication only, however. Observed reality will now be dealt with by his fictional presence; the responsibility for events being delegated to his theatrical identity acting within his literary imagination. Like his near contemporary, J Alfred Prufrock, Giacomo knows full well that he is “not Prince Hamlet” (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 17) but, unlike that “attendant lord”, he allows himself the freedom to ponder the possibilities if he were.

¹⁴ Sibilants will return — “not single spies, / But in battalions” (*Idem*, IV. v. 78-9) to taunt him during his major crisis: “Sliding-space-ages-foliage of stars-and waning heaven-stillness-and stillness deeper-stillness of annihilation-and her voice” (*Giacomo Joyce* 16).

In one of Joyce's very few existing references to *Giacomo Joyce*, he wrote from Zurich in 1917 to Ezra Pound (who was looking for magazine material) that "I have some prose sketches . . . but they are locked up in my desk in Trieste. As regards excerpts from *Ulysses*, the only thing I could send would be the Hamlet chapter, or part of it" (*Selected Letters* 225). The prose sketches are *Giacomo Joyce*. The *Hamlet* chapter is, of course, "Scylla and Charybdis", in which Stephen expounds his Shakespeare theory to a not particularly "docile" audience, especially after Mulligan's arrival, in the National Library. The letter underlines, perhaps coincidentally, a link between *Giacomo Joyce* and *Hamlet*. What I shall now move on to propose is that this connection, as we have seen, runs deep and had already, if only subconsciously, conditioned Joyce's structuring of the Triestine text, creating a parallel version of Shakespeare's five acts.

When Joyce came to write *Giacomo Joyce*, he had already begun to think about the possibility of presenting everyday experience within the framework of a classic of world literature. Ordinary Dubliners, of course, would later be famously part of a free adaptation of *The Odyssey*. *Giacomo Joyce* can, I believe, be seen as a kind of prototype, a trial run, in a sense, for *Ulysses*; in that it presents a select group of ordinary Trieste inhabitants within a small-scale adaptation of a classic work of literature, *Hamlet*.

Like *Hamlet*, *Giacomo Joyce* starts with a question, "Who?" And as with the ghost in the Shakespeare, there is a mystery figure to pursue and discover "in the castle, [with its] gibbeted coats of mail, rude iron sconces over the windings of the winding turret". The "stones" in this "castle" are indeed "resonant" (*Giacomo Joyce* 1). Inside this "castle", during the lesson, the phrase "easy tepid speech" used to describe Giacomo's classroom delivery is also a fitting description of the manner in which Claudius speaks both to the court and Hamlet in I. ii. Although her classmate, like the Danish court, seems to be impressed — "*Che coltura!*" —, the student's reaction is, at first, one of "quiet disdain and resignation" showing her to be "a young person of quality" (*Idem*), and matching Hamlet's initial silence. The later pricks and stings of her eyes, however, suggest both the Prince's tone and attitude towards his uncle. The use of "quiver" is richly ambiguous here. To "quiver" can, of course, be to tremble slightly due to an emotion or through being cold. A quiver is also a long case for carrying arrows. Perhaps there is a distorted echo of Hamlet's famous "slings and

arrows” in the “stings and quivers” of the student’s “burning needleprick” (*Idem*)? This passage also brings to mind the “serpent” that “stung” Hamlet’s father and Gertrude’s troubled conscience which will “prick and sting her”. But this suggests some blurring of roles here. Who is Hamlet and who is Claudius in this scene? In casting himself, through tonal similarity, as Claudius with his “tepid speech”, Giacomo implicitly reveals his sense of guilt over the feelings aroused by the student and her disdainful awareness of them, in addition to manifesting the rather “automatic”, “mechanical” nature of his lessons; his thoughts being on other matters. Like Hamlet’s uncle, this teacher’s “words fly up” but his “thoughts remain below” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* III. iii. 97).

In my ‘Act II’ of the Joyce text, Giacomo rushes out of a tobacco shop to speak to his student but he is overexcited and can only produce “jumbled words of lessons, hours, lessons, hours: and slowly her pale cheeks are flushed with a kindling opal light. Nay, nay, be not afraid!” (*Giacomo Joyce* 4). This can be seen as a parodic mirroring of the account Ophelia gives to her father in the second act of *Hamlet*, when the Prince appears before her “As if he had been loosed out of hell / To speak of horrors, he comes before me”. “What said he?” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* II. i. 86) asks Polonius. Ophelia, however, is unable to say, and goes on simply to describe the prince’s crazed actions. According to this account, Hamlet said nothing to her. Whether Giacomo’s student, presented with “jumbled words” rather than actions, would have been able to give a significantly more detailed report is doubtful. The next paragraph begins with “Mio padre” (“My father”) (*Giacomo Joyce* 5). In Giacomo’s mind she has, like her Shakespearean parallel, gone directly to her father after this embarrassing outburst.

Although this article does not aim to explore *Giacomo Joyce* in relation to the author’s life, if we choose to see the text as biographical, the events are, as Ellmann states, “out of sequence as often as in” (Ellmann intro., *Giacomo Joyce* xiv). Bearing this in mind, it seems appropriate that the parallels with *Hamlet* do not always match the order in which they occur in the Shakespeare: “the time is out of joint” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* I. v. 196), we might say. Therefore, for example, on the opening page, the word “brief” appears three times, following “Yes”. This affirmation, in an apparently innocent context, is immediately taken up and exploited by

Giacomo to feed his fundamental doubts about the future possibilities of any relationship between them. The echo from *Hamlet* comes, of course, from the play within the play: Ophelia comments on the length of the prologue, "Tis brief, my lord"; and Hamlet replies, "As woman's love" (*Idem*, III. ii. 148-9).

The graveyard scene, which takes place in Act V of the Shakespeare, happens in my Act II of *Giacomo Joyce*, where Meissel's "suicide wife" (*Giacomo Joyce* 6) is the focus of the visit. The student gives a flower in my Act I (the event later becoming one of the *Pomes Penyeach*¹⁵); Ophelia distributes flowers in Act IV before, in her mad state, effectively committing suicide.

Hamlet also meets the players in this act and begins to prepare them for a performance after the First Player has performed "a dream of passion" about "the hellish Pyrrhus" and Hecuba, "the mobbled queen" (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* II. ii. 546, 459, 499). Giacomo's "dream of passion", his fantasy about helping the student to dress as she prepares to go to a play (*Giacomo Joyce* 6), is linked to death and juxtaposed with the memory of standing by a suicide's grave, bringing Ophelia inevitably to mind.

Similarly, in the third act of *Hamlet*, there is the performance of *The Mousetrap*, a theatrical device used to replace direct action by the protagonist, as well as, in a sense, blocking or redirecting dangerous emotions. In the Joyce, Giacomo similarly withdraws behind his two "performances": his singing of the Dowland song after being stirred by the sight of "a leg-stretched web of stocking" (*Idem* 9), and the lectures on *Hamlet* after his sexually-charged fantasy set in Paris (*Idem* 15). In *Hamlet*, it is also after the spheres of theatre and real life touch and tremble that the prince does finally act, albeit confusedly, stabbing Polonius. This is paralleled, in typically vicarious and disjointed fashion, by Giacomo's graphic imaginings of the surgeon's knife operating on the student, which are at once both terrified and sexually suggestive: "The surgeon's knife has probed in her entrails and withdrawn, leaving the raw jagged gash of its passage on her belly" (*Idem* 11).

¹⁵ "A Flower Given to My Daughter", *Pomes Penyeach* in *Poems and Shorter Writings*, 53.

The fourth acts of *Hamlet* and *Giacomo Joyce* share a strong emphasis on sensory perception and physicality. In the Shakespeare, many of these references are prompted by the search for Polonius' decaying body. In the Joyce, the same effect stems from intense thoughts about the girl's body and the oppressive physicality of the theatre-goers. Shakespeare's act four is also highly and self-consciously theatrical, full of action. It is also the act in which the main character appears least, a common theatre practice of the time, allowing the actor to prepare for the physical and emotional demands of the final act. Similarly, Giacomo slightly retreats into the background, with his focus being on the theatre audience, spectators rather than actors, reflecting his own genuine role in the events his imagination fashions.

Ophelia's madness in IV. v. finds an echo in the transformation of the student who, at least in Giacomo's eyes, becomes a strange, disturbed being: "Her face, how grey and grave! Dark matted hair". Like Ophelia's crazed singing, the student's "sighing breath comes through" and even Giacomo feels his own "voice, dying in the echoes of its words" (*Idem* 14) just as the words of the Danish court fail to reach Ophelia. Whilst Laertes is stirred into action by Ophelia's vulnerable state, Giacomo is only driven to urge others to take advantage of the student's seeming surrender to her fate as "she leans back ... into luxurious obscurity": "Take her now who will!" (*Ibid.*). His attempt at triumph falls flat, however. He may have found his voice again but not the means to act, even in his imagination.

The fifth acts of both *Hamlet* and *Giacomo Joyce* feature rather surreal scenes or, at least, episodes that seem tangential to the general tone and feel of their respective texts. In *Giacomo Joyce*, there is the hallucinatory "narrow Parisian room" (*Idem* 15) scene in which Gogarty appears: a rather ambiguous friend to the author and self-conscious comic performer (who, of course, achieved the mixed blessing of literary immortality as "Buck Mulligan" in *Ulysses*). In the Shakespeare, Hamlet meets the comic gravediggers and is "reunited" with Yorick, the court jester. There is also a duel, which does not go according to the established rules, in both pieces. The physical, literal duel of *Hamlet*, however, is transformed into a verbal, metaphorical conflict in *Giacomo Joyce*. When we come across: "'Why?' / 'Because otherwise I could not see you'" (*Idem* 16).

We are suddenly aware that the confrontation, the "duel" between

student and teacher, implicitly promised since the beginning of the text, has actually taken place “off stage”, without our knowledge. Giacomo’s most, perhaps only, truly significant attempt in the text to act has yielded only this rather pallid promise of continued contact. Perhaps the memory of those moments are simply too painful to report? A further possibility is that they will not fit into the grand theatrical framework he has been trying to establish. Such overt action has no place in a tale so largely performed within the confines of imagination. In the cutting or absence of this scene possibly lies Giacomo’s acknowledgement that he has broken his own rules. For whatever reason, however, (and so appropriately for a text in which passivity seems, ironically, to dominate) we are only presented with the consequences, the reaction; not the action itself through the most significant of the few pieces of direct speech in *Giacomo Joyce*.

What follows is a textual breakdown, unlike anything else in the work, mirroring Giacomo’s state: “Sliding-space-ages-foliage of stars-and waning heaven-stillness-and stillness deeper-stillness of annihilation-and her voice” (*Ibid.*).

What has caused this state, this “stillness of annihilation”, so close to Hamlet’s “the rest is silence”? Whether it is through direct or indirect theatrical echoes both the Shakespeare and the Joyce put far more emphasis on reactions than their cause. The “reactor” rather than the actor is thrust under the spotlight. *Giacomo* is ultimately a text about being a spectator. Here we are only given the reaction to the most dramatic moment of the story. Reading between the lines, as we must, it seems that Giacomo has finally made some kind of declaration to the student. She has rejected him and, probably, asked him not to speak of it again, giving her reason which is, rather ironically, the only implicitly affectionate thing she says to Giacomo in the entire text. Giacomo is unable to give us his declaration; not even disguised by a theatrical quotation or allusion. He is, after all, like Prufrock, just “an attendant lord”. The student’s calm and kindly response, even as she seems to let him know she has chosen another, suggests that she does not feel particularly threatened (and perhaps was not even surprised) by his declaration. Enveloped in so much fiction, the true moment of potential drama has, perhaps inevitably, come and gone almost unnoticed. The “stillness” which comes over Giacomo after the student’s “Because otherwise I could not see you” is perfectly in keeping with

Hamlet's last words: "the rest is silence" (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* V. ii. 363). Here, however, the literary moves into the religious as Hamlet's final words reproduce the tone of Christ's "Consumatum est".¹⁶ Any doubts that Giacomo Joyce is now also implicitly casting himself as an ironic Christ figure are dispelled by the way he expresses his realisation that she has chosen another: "*Non hunc sed Barabbam!*" (*Giacomo Joyce* 16).¹⁷ That he is aware of the irony of this casting is shown by his inverted reference to *Hamlet* through his use of "Unreadiness" (*Idem*): both Hamlet and Christ were ultimately ready to face their fate.¹⁸

Giacomo Joyce, like the prince, finds emotional release through the theatre; though the teacher is even more spectator than actor. Torn between his attraction for his student and the guilt that attraction instils, he attempts to avoid responsibility whilst satisfying emotional and intellectual needs through imaginatively casting the girl in different theatrical roles and implicitly taking on complementary, self-aggrandising — and of course distancing — roles himself, with the Prince of Denmark as his "first player". Hamlet talks about theatre holding a mirror up to nature (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* III. ii. 22), reflecting the truth, observed reality. Giacomo retreats into the world of imagination, with Hamlet being the major ghost in his theatrical mirror, reflecting the distorted reality that Giacomo, at a safe distance, vicariously enjoys: for the English teacher, even more so than for the Prince, "the play's the thing" (*Idem*, II. ii. 600).

¹⁶ "It is finished" (*King James Version*, *John* 19:30).

¹⁷ "Not this man [Christ] but Barabbas!" (*Idem*, *Luke* 23:18).

¹⁸ Other literary ghosts from Giacomo's mirror are invoked here. In addition to the echo of Hedda Gabler's bitterly ironic "After this, I will be quiet" (Ibsen 184), Beatrice Cenci declares that "We are quite ready. Well, 'tis very well" in the last line of *The Cenci* (Shelley, V. iv. 165).

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Appendix

| Act Nº | <i>Hamlet</i> (Total number of lines: 3 892) | <i>Giacomo Joyce</i> (Total number of lines: 250) |
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| I | <p>The play starts with “Who” and is set within a castle. Hamlet is introduced and confronted with the ghost of his dead father, who urges him to act. This begins Hamlet’s agonising as to whether to act on his feelings and suspicions or not.</p> <p>The deceptive suaveness of Claudius is made clear. The domineering attitude of Polonius towards Ophelia is established.</p> <p>Act I has 863 lines (22.17%)</p> | <p>My “Act I” runs from “Who?” to “And when she next doth ride abroad/May I be there to see!” (p. 4 paragraph 1)</p> <p>The play starts with “Who”, which introduces a mystery figure for the protagonist to pursue and discover in a castle-like setting. Giacomo, his pupil and her father are introduced. The deceptive smoothness of public speech is made apparent. The problem presented is his fascination for her and her ambiguous reaction to him, in addition to her close relationship with her father.</p> <p>Act I has 53 lines (21.20%)</p> |
| II | <p>Ophelia tells Polonius of Hamlet who, seemingly mad, has approached her half-undressed. Hamlet meets the players and begins to prepare them for a performance after the First Player has performed “a dream of passion”.</p> <p>Act II has 780 lines (20.04%)</p> | <p>My “Act II” begins with “I rush out of the tobacco-shop” (p. 4 paragraph 2) and finishes with “Hedda! Hedda Gabler!” (p. 8 paragraph 2).</p> <p>Giacomo has rushed out to speak to the student but has only managed to produce an incoherent babble. His fantasy about helping her to dress as she prepares to go to a play is juxtaposed with the memory of standing by a suicide’s grave.</p> <p>Act II has 51 lines (20.4%)</p> |

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| III | <p>The performance of <i>The Mousetrap</i> is a theatrical device used to replace direct action by the protagonist, as well as redirecting what are conceived as dangerous emotions. It is also here that the prince does finally act, albeit misguidedly, and stabs Polonius.</p> <p>Act III has 897 lines (23.5%)</p> | <p>My "Act III" starts with "The sellers offer on their altars the first fruits" (p. 8 paragraph 3) and closes with "O cruel wound! Libidinous God!" (p. 11 paragraph 3).</p> <p>Giacomo similarly withdraws behind his two "performances": his singing of the Dowland song after being stirred by the sight of "a leg-stretched web of stocking", and the lectures on <i>Hamlet</i> after his sexually-charged fantasy set in Paris. Hamlet's stabbing of Polonius is paralleled, in typically indirect and distorted fashion, by Giacomo's terrified, yet strangely graphic imaginings of the action of the surgeon's knife upon the student.</p> <p>Act III has 58 lines (23.2%)</p> |
| IV | <p>The questioning over and search for Polonius' body brings in many references to the senses and physicality. Shakespeare's Act Four is an act of self-conscious theatricality drawing in all the characters. They are driven to "act" here. Following her mad scene, a strangely passive Ophelia drowns, perhaps unconsciously committing suicide, and there is a plot against Hamlet, who appears less in this act.</p> <p>Act IV has 650 lines (16.7%)</p> | <p>My "Act IV" opens with "Once more in her chair by the window," (p. 11 paragraph 4) and closes with the exclamation "Take her now who will!" (p. 14 paragraph 2).</p> <p>Her body and the spectators in the theatre usher in a multitude of references to the senses and physicality. Giacomo's focus on the theatre audience, spectators rather than actors, reflects his genuine role in the events his imagination fashions. Even less directly involved now, he stands even more passively apart directing his theatre of the mind. Ophelia's madness in scene V finds an echo in the transformation of the student who, in Giacomo's eyes, is transformed into some strange, disturbed being. She is, like Ophelia, grotesquely submissive.</p> <p>Act IV has 41 lines (16.4%)</p> |

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| V | <p>Hamlet experiences the strangely disjointed graveyard scene, in which he is “reunited” with Yorick before Ophelia’s funeral. The prince comes to a decision, a sense of readiness, and takes part in the duel. He ‘purifies’ the court but his own destruction is part of that process. The immediate problem is resolved but there is some ambiguity as to what will happen to Denmark in the hands of Hamlet’s successor.</p> <p>Act V has 702 lines (18.04%)</p> | <p>My “Act V” begins with “As I come out of Ralli’s house I come upon her suddenly...” (p. 14 paragraph 3) and, obviously, runs to the end of the text.</p> <p>The speaker experiences the hallucinatory “Parisian room” scene in which he is strangely “reunited” with an old friend with a taste for the comic. He is in turmoil, as the struggle with his conscience reaches its peak.</p> <p>He then discovers that she has chosen another rather than him. He has lost some form of “duel” for her affections and he feels at once rejected and saved. The possibility of a guilt-ridden relationship, however faint, has been ended.</p> <p>Nevertheless, we are left with another “knot” or puzzle to untie by way of the objects left on top of the piano and the “envoy”. What the immediate future holds for them and their relationship is unclear.</p> <p>Act V has 47 lines (18.8%)</p> |
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ABSTRACT

Between November 1912 and February 1913, Joyce gave a series of 12 lectures on *Hamlet* at the Università del Popolo, Trieste. Although these lectures are now lost, his extensive surviving notes suggest that the play was very much in his mind when he came to write *Giacomo Joyce* in 1914.

Giacomo Joyce sketches the obsession of an English teacher (who may or may not be entirely Joyce) for an unnamed female student in Trieste. Full of literary and, especially, theatrical allusions, Joyce's last published work draws us into a search for the theatrical within the narrative as the nature of the protagonist's relationship with his girl student is explored through juxtaposition with a range of allusions from the world stage. No textual "ghosts in the mirror", however, are reflected more significantly in *Giacomo Joyce* than *Hamlet*.

This article argues that Shakespeare not only provides Joyce with distorted verbal echoes and parallel events, but actually furnishes an underlying structure for *Giacomo Joyce* as a whole, through the Elizabethan 5 act structure.

This structural adoption of a classic text to examine contemporary experience can be seen as paving the way for *Ulysses*, which had been in preparation for some time and on which Joyce was about to embark.

KEYWORDS

James Joyce; *Giacomo Joyce*; Shakespeare; *Hamlet*; theatre

RESUMO

Entre Novembro de 1912 e Fevereiro de 1913, Joyce proferiu uma série de 12 conferências sobre *Hamlet* na Università del Popolo, em Trieste. Apesar do texto das conferências se ter perdido, as notas existentes sugerem que esta peça de teatro estava muito presente no seu espírito quando escreveu *Giacomo Joyce* em 1914. *Giacomo Joyce* esboça a obsessão de um professor de inglês (que pode ser ou não ser Joyce) com uma aluna anónima em Trieste.

Repleta de alusões literárias e teatrais, esta obra de Joyce leva-nos a procurar o teatro dentro da narrativa à medida que explora a natureza da relação do protagonista com a sua aluna através da justaposição de um leque de alusões e referências teatrais. Contudo, nenhum dos outros “espectros no espelho” é refletido tão significativamente como *Hamlet*.

Este artigo defende que Shakespeare não só sugeriu a Joyce ecos verbais e acontecimentos paralelos, mas forneceu concretamente a estrutura subjacente a *Giacomo Joyce* como um todo, através da estrutura isabelina em 5 atos.

Esta adoção da estrutura de um texto clássico para examinar a experiência contemporânea poderá ser vista como um abrir caminho para *Ulysses* que, naquela altura, estava em preparação e cuja escrita Joyce estava prestes a iniciar.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

James Joyce; *Giacomo Joyce*; Shakespeare; *Hamlet*; teatro
